



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

PRESS STATEMENT ON THE UPDATE OF CORONAVIRUS

IN THE COUNTRY AND RESPONSE MEASURES AS AT 20TH

MARCH 2020

Yesterday, we announced that there were no new coronavirus cases, and that the seven patients who have tested positive for the virus are still undergoing treatment and are stable. We continue to monitor their progress, as well as the individuals that come into contact with them. Following successful contact tracing, we are now monitoring an additional **seven (7)** people.

We have released a total of forty four (44) contacts following expiry of the 14 days follow up period. Four (4) more suspected cases have been admitted at Mbagathi Isolation unit since my last update. One (1) case tested negative for COVID-19 and is being processed for discharge. The

remaining three are awaiting laboratory results. We are also following a case in Kilifi County. The results of these tests will be clear by tomorrow 7.00 O'clock.

Our actions continue to be guided by the trends that we have observed in other countries. Evidence from other countries indicate that the number of infected persons increases dramatically in the second week following confirmation of a first case. Consequently, **the next two weeks are extremely critical for this country**, as we seek to contain the outbreak.

We remain focused on emphasizing high levels of hygiene and the maintenance of social distances as the most effective containment measures.

These measure require the concerted and committed efforts of all of us. Every person must play their part in reducing the risk of transmission **through a whole of government, and whole of society approach**. If there is a moment in our country's history where we need to embrace the Harambee Spirit - **it is today and it is now**. Our actions this coming week

in particular, will determine whether we shall go into a full blown crisis with grave human and economic consequences, or whether we shall limit the adverse impacts of this disease, save lives and reduce the impact to our economy.

Balancing the imperative to contain the impact of this disease and the desire to ensure the continuity of social –economic activity without **implementing extreme actions**, the National Emergency Response Committee at its meeting today 20th March 2020, has resolved and directed the taking of the following additional pre-cautionary measures:

- a. All entertainment, bars and other social spaces, are to close their doors to the public by 7.30pm every day until further notice, effective Monday, 23rd March 2020. During operational hours, all such facilities are to define the maximum number of persons within their premises at any given time so as to conform to the social distance requirements of at least **1.5 meter apart**. The above facilities are further encouraged to introduce where possible home delivery services and other innovative mechanisms to support this initiative.

b. All supermarkets are required to limit the number of shoppers inside the premises at any given time, in a manner that conforms to the social distance requirements of at least **1.5 meter apart**. All supermarkets are directed to determine the number of shoppers based on the size of their premises. A queue management system must be established to manage crowds outside the supermarket with preference given to the **elderly, expectant mothers and people living with disability**. Similarly, supermarkets and other such establishments are to encourage home delivery services while maintaining high standards of hygiene. All supermarket facilities must also disinfect their facilities several times daily. This requirement extends to malls and other such like shopping facilities. Where feasible we encourage supermarkets to operate on a 24-hour basis and upon request the Government will facilitate the provision of the necessary security personnel.

c. Open air markets including vegetable, mitumba and bazaars are high risk transmission environments. The management of local markets are directed to ensure that the premises are disinfected regularly to maintain high standards of hygiene. Vegetable markets in particular are required to ensure that their goods are displayed on raised platforms, waste and other garbage is collected daily.

d. The County Governments are required to prioritize garbage collection and cleanliness of all markets as well as ensure provision of soap and clean water in all market centers. As far as possible, social distance requirements should be observed. For the avoidance of doubt, markets are to remain open until further advised.

e. Corporations and businesses have already been encouraged to allow where possible employees to work

from home. Where employees are in office, the employer should ensure that social distance requirements are adhered to. Employees may be encouraged to proceed on leave at this time. We have noted that some companies have yet to comply with the advisory already issued. Your support as I have indicated earlier will have a significant impact on the trajectory and impact of this disease.

f. To ensure business continuity for our manufacturers and industries, factories are required to operate using minimum workforce on a 24-hour shift rotation system so as to assure compliance with social distance requirements and logistics of public transport for workers. Where additional security is required, please liaise with your local police station.

g. To reduce the risk of transmission in our public transport system, we encourage as much as possible, that persons

stay at home unless on essential business. Public service vehicle operators have already been asked to observe high levels of hygiene during this period. In order to maintain social distance requirements in public service vehicles, it is directed that:

- i. For 14 seater matatus, a maximum of 8 passengers
- ii. For 25 seater vehicles, a maximum of 15 passengers
- iii. For 30 seater vehicles and above, to maintain 60% maximum of seating capacity. This similarly applies for SGR and commuter train services.

Public service operators must further clean and disinfect their vehicles at the end of each trip, and provide sanitizers for passengers. We welcome the decision by the Kenya Revenue Authority to release seized ethanol for the manufacture of sanitizers that are to be distributed free of charge to the public once the production is ready.

h. In furtherance of the directive by H.E. The President, all hospital management in public and private hospitals are to restrict patient visitation to family and relatives of patients who have been expressly contacted by the hospital. Such persons will be allowed access for purposes of facilitating specific requests pertaining to patient care among them being blood/organ donation, payment of bills, discharge of patients etc.

i. We reiterate once again, that all travelers coming into the country, now restricted to Kenyans and foreigners with valid residence permits must self-quarantine for a period of 14 days, failure to which they risk arrest and prosecution under the Public Health Act, Cap 242. We wish to specifically reiterate that the self-quarantine requirement applies to diplomats and international organization staff irrespective of stature.

All previously communicated, measures on handwashing and hygiene standards are the most effective ways to manage the spread of the virus.

Once again I thank all those who have already made individual and collective efforts to sensitize and manage our overall responses to the outbreak in particular the 4th Estate. These measures may be inconvenient at the moment, but I assure that they are necessary for meeting our indicated objective of keeping all Kenyans safe. We call for self-discipline and active public goodwill in this endeavor.

Hon Mutahi Kagwe, EGH

CABINET SECRETARY